

Editorial

Clinico-pathological conferences

Decision making in clinical medicine is based on detailed knowledge of the clinical manifestation and pathogenesis of the disease, previous experience, availability of diagnostic and treatment facilities and increasingly, in recent years, patient expectations and demands. Where the clinical presentation, treatment, investigations and outcome of the disease are clearly defined, decisions about differential diagnosis, possible investigations, and treatment are usually straightforward. However, where the progress, prognosis, possible complications and treatment are unknown, varied or ill-defined, clinical decision making may be haphazard. Infection with HIV is just such a disease.

The best way of monitoring and improving clinical care is by audit; clinical audit is now a routine part of medical practice. A second form of audit is by the use of clinico-pathological conferences (CPCs), where useful information about disease processes, causes of death, prognosis, and the success or failure of treatment, are considered in the context of detailed

pathological material obtained from biopsies or at post mortem.

HIV related CPCs have become a routine part of audit at The Middlesex Hospital and a selection of these will be published in *Genitourinary Medicine* on a regular basis. The series will be edited by a clinician, Dr Rob Miller a lecturer in the Department of Medicine at The Middlesex Hospital and two pathologists, Dr Sebastian Lucas, and Professor Leslie Michel Department of Histopathology, University College Hospital. The format of each will be similar, starting with a case presentation followed by a discussion (where a clinician who does not know the final pathological diagnosis will give his or her opinion), then the post-mortem findings will be given, and finally there will be a general discussion. Each CPC will be accompanied by a brief selection of important publications related to the subject.

We hope you find these presentations educational, enjoyable and perhaps controversial and we would welcome comments or criticisms.

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